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Bureau of Land Management
News Release

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BLM Announces Notice of Intent to Amend CDCA Plan

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Needles, Calif., Field Office, announces a Notice of Intent (NOI) to amend the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan with an associated environmental assessment that would make all or a portion of the 223,000-acre Valley Wells Allotment, located in eastern San Bernardino County, unavailable for grazing livestock. The proposal to make a portion or all of the allotment unavailable for grazing does not conform to the CDCA Plan and, therefore, requires the development of a plan amendment.

Approximately half of the allotment is within the Shadow Valley Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA) designated by the BLM through the Northern and Eastern Mojave Desert Management Plan. Most, but not all, of the DWMA contains critical habitat of the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), designated endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Making all or a portion of the allotment unavailable for grazing would complement and enhance implementation of the USFWS Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Recovery Plan (1994) by making cattle grazing unavailable throughout the allotment.

Additional benefits to non-listed species and habitats, such as the Rusby's desert mallow (*Sphaeralcea rusbyi* ssp. *eremicola*) and the fringe-toed lizard (*Uma scoparia*), also would be realized by removal of cattle grazing from the non-DWMA portion of the allotment.

Public comments will be accepted throughout the plan amendment and environmental assessment process and should be submitted in writing to the BLM, Needles Field Office, attention George R. Meckfessel, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, 1303 South U.S. Highway 95, Needles, CA 92363. Comments will be accepted through Oct. 31, 2008.

The NOI has been posted to the Needles Field Office web page, <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/needles.html>, and is available for review at the Needles Field Office. Documents pertinent to this notice, including comments of respondents, will be available for public review at the Needles Field Office during regular business hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) Monday through Friday, except holidays.

For further information and/or to have your name added to the action's mailing list, contact George R. Meckfessel, (760) 326-7008, or e-mail George_Meckfessel@ca.blm.gov.

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